

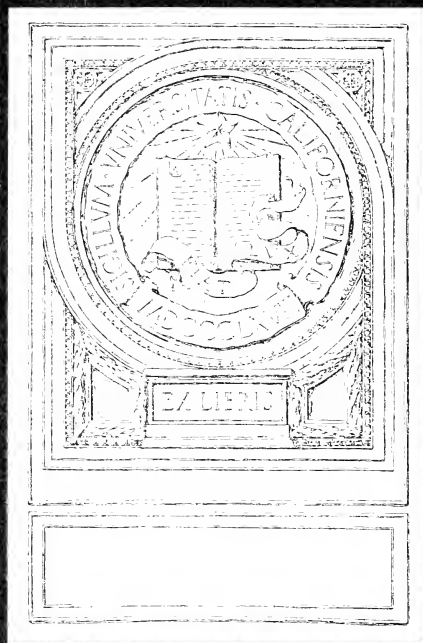
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MODERN LANGUAGE NOTES

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JOSEPH E. GILLET.

University of Minnesota.

SCOGAN'S *QUEM QUÆRITIS*

It would be hard to imagine a less likely place than *Scoggins Jests* from which to extract a seriously worthy new version of the Easter *Quem Quæritis*. As well go to Mr. Dooley for light on modern Irish drama as to Scogan for light on liturgical drama. Yet both mediæval and modern clowns might conceivably have directed jests illuminatingly over the respective subjects.

The mysterious compiler who acted humble Boswell to Scogan or Scoggin by recounting his jests helps to prove, I believe, that what Chambers thinks the highest development of the Easter drama, the form in which Christ himself appears, was fairly common in England as well as on the Continent. Professor Young has recently published one fourteenth century English play of that form.¹ Scogan seems to indicate a wider knowledge of the type in England. Chambers knew only Continental versions. He says:² "The addition of the apostle scene completed the evolution of the Easter play for the majority of churches. There were, however, a few in which the very important step was taken of introducing the person of the risen Christ himself; and this naturally entailed yet another new scene. Of this type there are fifteen extant versions, coming from one Italian, four French, and four German churches. . . . Here (in a Fleury play which he describes as an example) the Christ appears twice, first disguised in *similitudinem hortolani*, afterwards in *similitudinem domini* with the *labarum* or resurrection banner."

¹ *Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters*, XVI, part 2 (1909), 929-30.

² *The Mediæval Stage* (1903), II, 31-2.

One of Scoggin's ungodly practical jokes needed for a setting just this kind of Easter play, and the author's mood was for going into interesting details. This occurs only in the 1613 edition of *Scoggins Iestes. Wherein is declared his pleasant pastimes in France; and of his meriments among the Fryers: full of delight and honest mirth*. Of this book the one copy now extant, so far as I am aware, is that in the Bodleian library which I have examined and described for a recently published investigation into Scoggin's slippery identity.³ It gives a quite different lot of jests from those of the 1626 edition reprinted by Hazlitt in his *Shakespeare Jest-Books*. The tale of the Easter play is the eighth jest, although the book has no numbering of pages or jests which may be referred to. It is in Scoggin's best scurrilous vein:

How Scoggin set a whole towne together by the eares. At Easter following Scoggin came to the same Village againe, at which time the Parson of the towne (according to the order of the popish Clergie would needes haue a stage play,) [parenthesis sic] and as in that age the whole earth was almost planted with superstition & idolatry, so such like prophane pastimes was greatly delighted in, especially playes made of the Scripture at an Easter, as I said before) the Parson of the Village would haue a play of the resurrection of the Lord, and for because the men were not learned, nor could not reade, hee tooke a lemman that he kept (hauing but one eye) and put her in the graue of an Angell which when Scoggin saw, he went to two of the simplest fellowes in the towne, that plaid the three *Maries*: and the Parson himselfe plaid Christ with a banner in his hand. Then said Scoggin to the simple fellowes when the Angell asketh you whom you seeke, you must say the Parsons lemman with one eye, so it fortunated that the time was come that they must play and the Angell asked them whom they sought? Marry quoth they, as Scoggin had taught them, wee seeke the Priestes lemman with one eye, which when the woman hearde, she arose out of the graue and all to be scratched one of the poore fellowes by the face that plaid one of the three *Maries*: Whereupon hee soundly buffeted her about the eares, the priest seeing this threw down his banner and went to helpe his lemman, with that the other two fell upon the Priest, the clerkes likewise tooke the priests part, and many other of the parisioners on the contrary side, so yt in short time the whole towne lay together by the eares in the middle of the Church, which when Scoggin perceiued he went his way out of the village and came no more there.

It should be said at once that the compiler of the jests in the 1613 edition pretends that he has translated his book from French.

³ *Modern Language Review*, xvi (1921), 120 ff.

On page one appears the heading: *Certaine Merrie Iestes of Scoggin translated out of French*. This is fiction, we may be sure, and we can pass it over with the same laughter,—or scorn, if Scogan happens to be too elemental for us,—which we accord the other jests. The compiler plainly thought to add authority to these Continental adventures of Scogan by pretending that they were originally recorded in French, but there is not the slightest evidence of a French original anywhere, and Scogan's vogue has always been of the English English. Moreover, the game is given away by the duplication in the 1613 edition of four jests in the unquestionably English 1626 edition, which of itself is probably only a copy of a much earlier edition.⁴ The English setting becomes French with the greatest ease.

And so with some assurance we can guess that this tale of the priest and his one-eyed lemmman describes an English play. The writer obviously considers himself much removed from the time, for he makes pointed reference to the earlier and more superstitious times which loved Easter plays. His violent anti-Popery proves the author to have belonged to Protestant England, but he probably reworked a jest handed down in folk-lore from previous generations. The earliest certain date for any of *Scoggins Jestes* is 1565-6, when a collection now unknown was licensed for printing.⁵ However, the jests undoubtedly circulated in some form long before this, and, as I have tried to show at length elsewhere, Scoggin the jester was probably the same Scogan who lived in Chaucer's time and appears in Chaucer's *Envoy*.⁶

I think then that Scogan's jest of the Easter play makes very probable the existence in England, say during the early fifteenth century, of such a version as is described, but even if the setting is really French, this slovenly told little story is full of interest. Chambers says:⁷ "It must be borne in mind that the *Quem quæritis* remained imperfectly detached from the liturgy, out of which it arose. The performers were priests, or nuns, and choir-boys." But in Scogan's play the secularization seems to have gone so far that some of the parts at least were played by townspeople. Still

⁴ *Modern Language Review*, XVI, 123, note.

⁵ Arber's *Transcript*, I, 134.

⁶ *Modern Language Review*, XVI, 120 ff., as noted above.

⁷ Work cited, II, 35.

more interesting, the women's parts were played by men. The priest's lemman gets the part of the angel only because the simple fellows of the town were not lettered enough to take it. The brief sketch of the audience assembled in the church to see the play and falling into a fight over it is a breath of reality.

Because of the hit or miss fashion in which the jest is told, perhaps after all the most dependable and significant thing about it is the life-like picture of a priest with commendable artistic impulses, though unpraiseworthy morals, working up an Easter drama among parishioners neither artistic nor lettered. It must have happened so pretty often. Even though he is mediæval in morals, the priest is vividly like an earnest young rector of today getting up church theatricals. The whole story has a human touch which the Latin texts of the liturgical drama do not share.

Washington and Lee University.

WILLARD FARNHAM.

REVIEWS

Prepositional Phrases of Asseveration and Adjuration in Old and Middle French. By OLIVER TOWLES. Paris: Champion, 1920. x + 157 pp.

In his "Introduction" (pp. 7-10), the author of this Johns Hopkins dissertation summarizes the general principles involved in the use of invocatory formulas, and delimits the scope of his investigation. By confining his attention to "the invocation of objects of reverence and love by means of a phrase consisting of an introductory preposition plus the name of the object invoked," he excludes the consideration of such forms as *si m'ait dieu, le diable m'emporte*, etc. He further excludes prepositional phrases based on the name of some abstract quality (e. g., *par amour*), except when "as the result of the presence of the possessive pronoun (e. g., *par ma foi*), the abstraction seems to be made definite, personified and invoked." Exclamatory or interjectional forms are included only "where invocations in normal adjurative or asseverative forms, or in forms derived from them, are used interjectionally."¹

¹ What evidence is there that *beau Dieu, benoît Dieu* (p. 20), each of

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